

Movie Series at the National Gallery of Armenia, Winter 2005

Billy Wilder - One of Hollywood's Most Consistent & Enduring Filmmakers

The series is presented in association with the USA Embassy in Yerevan

Film Screenings Schedule

Saturday, March 5, 2005

12:00 Mauvaise Graine 1933, NR, 76 min.

14:30 The Lost Weekend 1945, NR, 101 min.

Sunday, March 6, 2005

12:00 Sunset Boulevard 1950, NR, 110 min.

14:30 Stalag 17 1953, NR, 120 min.

Saturday, March 12, 2005

12:00 Sabrina 1954, NR, 112 min.

14:30 SURPRISE SCREENING

Sunday, March 13, 2005

12:00 Witness For The Prosecution 1957, NR, 116 min.

14:30 Love In The Afternoon 1957, NR, 130 min.

Saturday, March 19, 2005

12:00 Some Like It Hot 1959, NR, 122 min.

14:30 The Apartment 1960, NR, 125 min.

Sunday, March 20, 2005

12:00 One, Two, Three 1961, NR, 109 min.

14:30 Irma La Douce 1963, NR, 143 min.

Saturday, March 26, 2005

12:00 Kiss Me, Stupid 1964, PG-13, 126 min.

14:30 The Fortune Cookie 1966, NR, 126 min.

Sunday, March 27, 2005

12:00 The Private Life Of Sherlock Holmes 1970, PG-13, 125 min.

14:30 Avanti! 1972, R, 144 min.

Films are shown in the 9th floor auditorium of the National Gallery of Armenia.

Seating for all events is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Food and drink are not allowed in the auditorium.

Programs are occasionally subject to change.

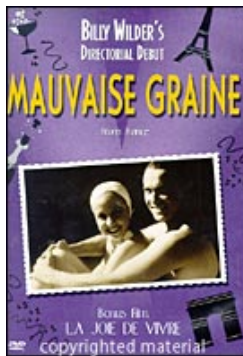
NGA's regular entrance fee applies.

For NGA Friends Club Members all events are free of charge.

For information call +(374-1)-580-812 or visit the Web site at www.gallery.am

Film Synopsis

(based on All Movie Guide information)



Mauvaise Graine 1933, 76 min.

The legendary Billy Wilder made his debut as a director with this comedy, shot in France (in collaboration with Alexander Esway) shortly before Wilder emigrated to the United States. Henry (Pierre Mingland) is a carefree young man who has fallen out of favor with his wealthy father, a doctor. Short on money and looking for excitement, Henry becomes involved with a gang of car thieves, and gets to know Jeanette (Danielle Darrieux), sister of the gang's leader who often acts as a decoy to distract young men with new cars as the thieves do their work. Henry soon falls in love with Jeanette, but discovers a life of crime is a bit more dangerous than he was counting on. *Mauvaise Graine* would prove to be Wilder's last European film; he wouldn't direct again for another nine years, when he made *The Major and the Minor*

after establishing himself as a top screenwriter. — Mark Deming



The Lost Weekend 1945, 101 min.

Billy Wilder's searing portrait of an alcoholic features an Oscar-winning performance by Ray Milland as Don Birnam, a writer whose lust for booze consumes his career, his life, and his loves. The story begins as Don and his brother Wick (Philip Terry) are packing their bags in their New York apartment, preparing for a weekend in the country. Philip, aware of his brother's drinking problem, is keeping an eye on him, making sure he doesn't sneak a drink before the departure of their train. Arriving at the apartment is Don's girlfriend, Helen St. James (Jane Wyman), who has tickets to a Carnegie Hall concert that night. Don persuades Wick and Helen to go to the concert without him, hoping to find one of his well-hidden bottles of booze. But when Wick and Helen go to the concert, Don discovers that Wick has gotten rid of the liquor.

Don has no money, so he can't visit the neighborhood bar — that is, until the cleaning lady arrives to reveal money hidden in a sugar-bowl. Don grabs the cash and hits the street, heading off to Nat's Bar. Nat (Howard Da Silva), a bartender who has seen it all, is surprised to see Don. But when Don shows he can pay for his drinks, Nat reluctantly serves him, telling Don, "One's too many and a thousand's not enough." Soon Don plunges in an alcoholic haze, his boozing landing him in a harrowing drunk tank, presided over by the cynical attendant Bim (Frank Faylen). — Paul Brenner



Sunset Boulevard 1950, 110 min.

Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* ranks among the most scathing satires of Hollywood and the cruel fickleness of movie fandom. The story begins at the end as the body of Joe Gillis (William Holden) is fished out of a Hollywood swimming pool. From *The Great Beyond*, Joe details the circumstances of his untimely demise (originally, the film contained a lengthy prologue wherein the late Mr. Gillis told his tale to his fellow corpses in the city morgue, but this elicited such laughter during the preview that Wilder changed it). Hotly pursued by repo men, impoverished, indebted "boy wonder" screenwriter Gillis ducks into the garage of an apparently abandoned Sunset Boulevard mansion. Wandering into the spooky place, Joe encounters its owner, imperious silent star Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson). Upon learning Joe's profession, Norma inveigles him into helping her with a comeback script that she's been working

on for years. Joe realizes that the script is hopeless, but the money is good and he has nowhere else to go. Soon the cynical and opportunistic Joe becomes Norma's kept man. While they continue collaborating, Norma's loyal and protective chauffeur Max Von Mayerling (played by legendary filmmaker Erich von Stroheim) contemptuously watches from a distance. More melodramatic than funny, the screenplay by Wilder and Charles Brackett began life as a comedy about a has-been silent movie actress and the ambitious screenwriter who leeches off her. (Wilder originally offered the film to Mae West, Mary Pickford and Pola Negri. Montgomery Clift was the first choice for the part of opportunistic screenwriter Joe Gillis, but he refused, citing as "disgusting" the notion of a 25-year-old man being kept by a 50-year-old woman.) Andrew Lloyd Webber's long-running musical version has served as a tour-de-force for contemporary actresses ranging from Glenn Close to Betty Buckley to Diahann Carroll. — Hal Erickson



Stalag 17 1953, 120 min.

The scene is a German POW camp, sometime during the mid-1940s. Stalag 17, exclusively populated by American sergeants, is overseen by sadistic commandant Oberst Von Schernbach (Otto Preminger) and the deceptively avuncular sergeant Schultz (Sig Ruman). The inmates spend their waking hours circumventing the boredom of prison life; at night, they attempt to arrange escapes. When two of the escapees, Johnson and Manfredi, are shot down like dogs by the Nazi guards, Stalag 17's resident wiseguy Sefton (William Holden) callously collects the bets he'd placed concerning the fugitives' success. No doubt about it: there's a security leak in the barracks, and everybody suspects the enterprising Sefton — who manages to obtain all the creature comforts he wants — of being a Nazi infiltrator.

Things get particularly dicey when Lt. Dunbar (Don Taylor), temporarily billeted in Stalag 17 before being transferred to an officer's camp, tells his new bunkmates that he was responsible for the destruction of a German ammunition train. Sure enough, this information is leaked to the Commandant, and Dunbar is subjected to a brutal interrogation. Certain by now that Sefton is the "mole", the other inmates beat him to a pulp. But Sefton soon learns who the real spy is, and reveals that information on the night of Dunbar's planned escape. Despite the seriousness of the situation, Stalag 17 is as much comedy as wartime melodrama, with most of the laughs provided by Robert Strauss as the Betty Grable-obsessed "Animal" and Harvey Lembeck as Stosh's best buddy Harry. Other standouts in the all-male cast include Richard Erdman as prisoner spokesman Huffy, Neville Brand as the scruffy Duke, Peter Graves as blonde-haired, blue-eyed "all American boy" Price, Gil Stratton as Sefton's sidekick Cookie (who also narrates the film) and Robinson Stone as the catatonic, shell-shocked Joey. Writer/producer/director Billy Wilder and co-scenarist Edmund Blum remained faithful to the plot and mood the Donald Bevan/Edmund Trzcinski stage play Stalag 17, while changing virtually every line of dialogue—all to the better, as it turned out (Trzcinski, who like Bevan based the play on his own experiences as a POW, appears in the film as the ingenuous prisoner who "really believes" his wife's story about the baby abandoned on her doorstep). William Holden won an Academy Award for his hard-bitten portrayal of Sefton, which despite a hokey "I'm really a swell guy after all" gesture near the end of the film still retains its bite today. — Hal Erickson



Sabrina 1954, 112 min.

Billy Wilder directs the lighthearted romantic comedy Sabrina, based on the play by Samuel A. Taylor. Sabrina Fairchild (Audrey Hepburn) is the simple, naive daughter of a chauffeur, Thomas Fairchild (John Williams). They live on an estate with the wealthy Oliver Larrabee (Walter Hampden) and his two sons: workaholic older brother Linus (Humphrey Bogart) and fun-loving younger brother David (William Holden). Sabrina adores the charming David, but he thinks of her as just a kid. Her father sends her away to Paris for chef school where she meets Baron St. Fontanel (Marcel Dalio), and she returns a worldly, sophisticated woman. David immediately falls for her, but he is already engaged to marry heiress Elizabeth Tyson (Martha Hyer). Sabrina wants to break up the wedding in order to finally catch the man of her dreams, while Linus fights to keep the marriage on in the interest of family business and Mr. Tyson's (Francis X. Bushman) fortune. In

order to keep Sabrina away from David, Linus pretends to court her himself. In doing so, they eventually realize their true feelings for each another. — Andrea LeVasseur



Witness For The Prosecution 1957, 116 min.

Having just recovered from a heart attack, fabled British barrister Sir Wilfred Robards (Charles Laughton) has been ordered by his doctor to give up everything he holds dear—brandy, cigars and especially courtroom cases. Robards' already shaky resolve to follow doctor's orders flies out the window when he takes up the defense of Leonard Vole (Tyrone Power), a personable young man accused of murdering a rich old widow. The case becomes something of a sticky wicket when Vole's "loving" German wife Christine (Marlene Dietrich) announces that she's not legally married to Robards' client—and she fully intends to appear as a witness for the prosecution! At the close of this film, a narrator implores the audience not to divulge the ending; we will herein honor that request. A delicious Billy Wilder mixture of humor, intrigue and melodrama, *Witness for the Prosecution* is distinguished by its hand-picked supporting cast: John Williams as the police

inspector, Henry Daniell as Robards' law partner, Una O'Connor as the murder victim's stone-deaf maid, Torin Thatcher as the prosecutor, Ruta Lee as a sobbing courtroom spectator, and Charles Laughton's wife Elsa Lanchester as Robards' ever-chipper nurse (a role especially written for the film, so that Lanchester could look after Laughton on the set). And keep an eye out for that uncredited actress playing the vengeful—and pivotal—cockney. Adapted by Wilder, Harry Kurnitz and Larry Marcus from the play by Agatha Christie, *Witness for the Prosecution* was remade for television in 1982. — Hal Erickson



Love In The Afternoon 1957, 130 min.

Gary Cooper more or less repeats his international-roue characterization from 1938's *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* for the 1957 romantic comedy *Love in the Afternoon* (both films were co-scripted by Billy Wilder, who also directed the latter picture). Audrey Hepburn co-stars as the daughter of Parisian private eye Maurice Chevalier. Investigating the amorous activities of Cooper, Chevalier relates what he's discovered to cuckolded husband John McGiver, who declares that he's going after Cooper with a pistol. Overhearing this conversation, Hepburn rushes off to rescue Cooper. She keeps him far away from McGiver by adopting a "woman of the world" pose. Cooper quickly sees through this charade; still, she is fascinated by Hepburn and attempts to relocate her after she disappears. Meeting Chevalier one day, Cooper relates the story of the Mystery

Woman, never dreaming that he is describing Chevalier's daughter. Equally in the dark, Chevalier offers to locate the elusive Hepburn. Once he's tumbled to the fact that his quarry is his own flesh and blood, Chevalier advises Hepburn against contemplating a relationship with the much-older Cooper. She, of course, fails to heed this warning, setting the stage for an ultraromantic finale. *Love in the Afternoon* is highlighted by a superb running gag involving a quartet of gypsy violinists, who insist upon dogging Cooper's trail wherever he goes—including a steam bath. *Love in the Afternoon* was adapted by Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond from the novel *Ariane* by Claude Anet. — Hal Erickson



Some Like It Hot 1959, 122 min.

The launching pad for Billy Wilder's comedy classic was a rusty old German farce, *Fanfares of Love*, whose two main characters were male musicians so desperate to get a job that they disguise themselves as women and play with an all-girl band in gangster-dominated 1929 Chicago. In this version, musicians Joe (Tony Curtis) and Jerry (Jack Lemmon) lose their jobs when a speakeasy owned by mob boss Spats Columbo (George Raft) is raided by prohibition agent Mulligan (Pat O'Brien). Several weeks later, on February 14th, Joe and Jerry get a job performing in Urbana and end up witnessing a gangland massacre in a parking garage. Fearing that they will be next on the mobsters' hit lists, Joe devises an ingenious plan for disguising their identities. Soon they are all dolled up and performing as Josephine and Daphne in Sweet Sue's all-girl orchestra. En route to Florida by train with Sweet Sue's band, the boys (girls?) make the acquaintance of

Sue's lead singer Sugar Kane (Marilyn Monroe, in what may be her best performance). Joe and Jerry immediately fall in love, though of course their new feminine identities prevent them from acting on their desires. Still, they are determined to woo her, and they enact an elaborate series of gender-bending ruses complicated by the fact that flirtatious millionaire Osgood Fielding (Joe E. Brown) has fallen in love with "Daphne." The plot gets even thicker when Spats Columbo and his boys show up in Florida. Nominated for several Oscars, *Some Like It Hot* ended up the biggest moneymaking comedy up to 1959. Full of hilarious set pieces and movie in-jokes, it has not tarnished with time and in fact seems to get better with each passing year, as its cross-dressing humor keeps it only more and more up-to-date. — Hal Erickson



The Apartment 1960, 125 min.

Widely regarded as a comedy in 1960, *The Apartment* seems more melancholy with each passing year. Jack Lemmon plays C.C. Baxter, a go-getting office worker who loans his tiny apartment to his philandering superiors for their romantic trysts. He runs into trouble when he finds himself sharing a girlfriend (Shirley MacLaine) with his callous boss (Fred MacMurray). Director/co-writer Billy Wilder claimed that the idea for *The Apartment* stemmed from a short scene in the 1945 romantic drama *Brief Encounter* in which the illicit lovers (Trevor Howard and Celia Johnson) arrange a rendezvous in a third person's apartment. Wilder was intrigued about what sort of person would willingly vacate his residence to allow virtual strangers a playing field for hanky panky. His answer to that question wound up winning 6 Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Original Screenplay. *The Apartment* was adapted by Neil Simon and Burt Bacharach into the 1969 Broadway musical *Promises, Promises*. — Hal Erickson



One, Two, Three 1961, 109 min.

In his last starring film (it was supposed to be his last film, but *Ragtime* came along in 1981), James Cagney plays Coca-Cola executive C. P. MacNamara. Assigned to manage Coke's West Berlin office, MacNamara dreams of being transferred to London, and to do this he must curry favor with his Atlanta-based boss Hazeltine (Howard St. John). Thus, MacNamara agrees to look after Hazeltine's dizzy, impulsive daughter Scarlett (Pamela Tiffin) during her visit to Germany. Weeks pass: On the eve of Hazeltine's visit to West Berlin, Scarlett announces that she's gotten married. Even worse: her husband is a hygienically challenged East Berlin Communist named Otto Piffl (Horst Buchholz). The crafty McNamara arranges for Piffl to be arrested by the East Berlin police and to have the marriage annulled, only to discover that Scarlett is pregnant. In rapid-fire "one, two, three" fashion, McNamara must: (a) arrange for Piffl to be released by the Communists; and (b) successfully pass off the scrungy, doggedly anti-capitalist Piffl as an acceptable husband for Scarlett. McNamara must accomplish this in less than twelve hours, all the while trying to mollify his wife (Arlene Francis), who has learned of his affair with busty secretary Ingeborg (Lilo Pulver). Seldom pausing for breath, Billy Wilder's film is a crackling, mile-a-minute farce, taking satiric scattershots at Coca-Cola, the Cold War (the film is set in the months just before the erection of the Berlin Wall), Russian red tape, Communist and capitalist hypocrisy, Southern bigotry, the German "war guilt," rock music, and even Cagney's own movie image. Not all the gags are in the best of taste, and most of the one-liners have dated rather badly, but Cagney's mesmerizing performance holds the whole affair together. Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond adapted their screenplay from an obscure play by Ferenc Molnar. Watch for Red Buttons in an unbilled cameo as a military policeman, and listen for the voice of Sig Ruman, emanating from the mouth of actor Hubert Van Meyerinck (*The Count von Droste-Schattenburg*). — Hal Erickson



Irma La Douce 1963, 143 min.

This romantic comedy opens with a resounding warning: its chief concerns are passion, bloodshed, desire, and death. "Everything," exclaims the narrator, "that makes life worth living." *Irma La Douce* (Shirley MacLaine) is Paris' most prosperous prostitute. Wise, endearing, and compulsively clad in green, Irma rules the rue Casanova. She triumphantly works the most coveted corner on a street where the cops gladly look the other way and the naughty johns leave tips. Her street is a content community of live and let live and good-natured desire, an Augean stable of human understanding. However, to upright Nester Patou (Jack Lemmon), the area's new policeman, genial wrongdoing is still wrongdoing. Freshly promoted from day patrol at a children's playground, the scrupulous Nester arrests Irma and her colleagues in a bumbling, unauthorized raid. He takes pity on Irma, but harasses the guilty johns — including the police captain.

Promptly unemployed, Nester returns to the scene of his crime, the rue, and to Irma. After physically besting her pimp, Nester unwittingly takes his position. The two fall madly in love, but Nester quickly grows jealous of Irma's patrons. Thus, he masquerades as a wealthy English aristocrat and becomes Irma's sole customer — only to eventually grow violently jealous of himself. Soon enough, this formally righteous cop is comically jailed for his own brutal murder! As the film's prologue promises, *Irma La Douce* is a celebration of life from beginning to end — unabashedly adoring lust, emotion, fervor and, above all, foolish love. — Aubry Anne D'Arminio



Kiss Me, Stupid 1964, 126 min.

The Catholic League of Decency gave Billy Wilder's *Kiss Me, Stupid!* a "condemned" rating. The Moral Majority charged the picture with debauchery and movie theaters across the nation discontinued its run. The bed-trick comedy had America's panties tied in a knot; one could not imagine a story so distasteful. Dean Martin is Dino, a Las Vegas crooner, alcoholic, and celebrity playboy. Dino requires women like oxygen — a companionless night leaves him with a headache. Ray Walston is Orville, a provincial piano teacher, aspiring songwriter, and jealous husband. Orville violently obsesses over his wife Zelda's (Felicia Farr) fidelity — any man she encounters becomes his sworn enemy. When a chance detour brings

Dino to Orville's hometown of Climax, NV, it is the perfect opportunity for the piano teacher and his songwriting partner, Barney (Cliff Osmond), to pitch their tunes. Yet, Orville predictably fears the possible combination of Dino's libido with Zelda's childhood crush on the singer. Before the two can meet, Orville deceitfully bullies Zelda out of their house and Barney hires local roadhouse prostitute Polly the Pistol (Kim Novak) to pose as Orville's wife. Zelda turns to drink for solace, ending up at the exact bar where Polly plies her trade and, eventually, in the call girl's empty trailer. By the next morning, Orville is with Polly and Dino (looking for a prostitute) finds his way to Zelda — and husband, wife, hooker, and Barney will all reap the benefits of infidelity. This tale may be tasteless, but *Kiss Me, Stupid!* is now a cable favorite. Its modern rating? PG. — Aubry Anne D'Arminio



The Fortune Cookie 1966, 126 min.

The British title of Billy Wilder's classic comedy was *Meet Whiplash Willie* — for, despite Jack Lemmon's star billing, the movie's driving force is Oscar-winning Walter Matthau as gloriously underhanded lawyer "Whiplash" Willie Gingrich. CBS cameraman Harry Hinkle (Lemmon) is injured when he is accidentally bulldozed by football player Luther "Boom Boom" Jackson (Ron Rich) during a Cleveland Browns game. Willie, Harry's brother-in-law, foresees an insurance-settlement bonanza, and he convinces Harry to pretend to be incapacitated by the accident. To insure his client's cooperation, Willie arranges for Harry's covetous ex-wife Sandy (Judi West) to feign a rekindling of their romance. Harry's conscience is plagued by the solicitous behavior of Boom Boom, who is so devastated at causing Harry's injury that he insists on waiting on the "cripple" hand and foot. Meanwhile, dishevelled private eye Purkey (Cliff Osmond) keeps

Harry under constant surveillance, hoping to catch him moving around so the insurance company can avoid shelling out a fortune. Wilder and usual co-writer I.A.L. Diamond were at their most jaundiced and cynical here, even if, after a sardonic semiclimax, the last ten minutes succumb to the sentimentality that often marred Wilder's later movies. — Hal Erickson



The Private Life Of Sherlock Holmes 1970, 125 min.

Though he remains faithful to the spirit of Conan Doyle in *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, director Billy Wilder comes up with a film that is every bit as individualistic as his other productions. British stage luminary Robert Stephens plays Holmes, while Colin Blakely is his friend and chronicler Dr. Watson. This "hitherto suppressed and thoroughly fascinating" tale concerns Holmes' search for a missing mining engineer—a case that may have a far-reaching effect on the national security of England. Along the way, Holmes falls in love for the first time in his life, with enigmatic foreign beauty Gabrielle Valladon (Genevieve Page). Wilder's attempts to overemphasize such trendy elements as homosexuality (notably during the film's amusing prologue) and drug addiction can be forgiven in the light of the director's (uncharacteristically) affectionate treatment of Holmes and Watson. Christopher

Lee, a former screen Holmes himself, has a delightful cameo (minus toupee) as Sherlock's brother Mycroft Holmes. Heavily re-edited and rearranged both before and after its release, *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* was a box-office disappointment when it first came out 1970. Since that time, its reputation has grown immeasurably, especially among those lucky enough to have seen a complete print. While it is hardly a classic in the manner of *Sunset Blvd.* or *Some Like It Hot*, this personal valentine to Holmes aficionados remains one of Billy Wilder's most pleasurable films. — Hal Erickson



Avanti! 1972, R, 144 min.

This enchanting yet dark romantic comedy stars Jack Lemmon and Juliet Mills as a pair of mismatched lovers helplessly drawn into a series of seemingly hopeless but humorous situations as in Lemmon's *The Out-of-Towners* two years earlier. Lemmon is Wendell Armbruster Jr., an overbearing American business tycoon forced to travel to the beautiful Italian island of Ischia to claim the body of his recently departed father. What begins with a rather elementary premise evolves into a succession of somber twists and turns, as Armbruster meets Pamela Piggott (Mills), the daughter of his father's mistress, who, Lemmon is appalled to learn, died alongside Armbruster Sr., while zipping through the Italian countryside in his sportscar. Even worse, the family who owns the vineyard that his father's car crashed into has stolen the bodies in exchange for damages. Although plagued with a plethora of such problems, as well as an inability to enjoy life (and the

ulcers to prove it), Wendell eventually falls in love with Pamela, almost exactly as his father did with her mother. — Don Kaye